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Interview at the Kennebunkport Streetcar Museum

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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Interview at the Kennebunk Street Railway Car Museum

Date: August 7, 1956

Recording number: Reel-to-reel Tape 5, part 3

Length of recording: 4:52

[Transcript begins]

Announcer: The following was recorded for use by monitor on August 7th 1956 at Kennebunk.

Mincher: There's a sound which hasn't been heard in many communities in the United States for a good many years and some of the very cars which were making those noises are continuing to make them here at Kennebunkport Maine. This is a Street Railway car museum and I probably haven't got the right terminology there, but anyway it's the New England Electric Railway Historical Society incorporated. It's a nonprofit organization and to find out more about just how it operates and what it looks like and why we think you'd be interested in seeing it, here is Mr. Pat Butler of St. Paul, Minnesota, who is currently in charge. Pat how many cars do we have here?

Butler: We have 47 cars at the present time.

Mincher: Do they all run?

Butler: No some of them are inoperative, but roughly 90 percent are in operating condition.

Mincher: Well everyone here riding on this car is having a big time, including me. This is my second ride and it takes me way back and I know what does everyone else, too. How did this idea get started and when was it?

Butler: In 1939 in the Biddeford and Saco Street Railway they were abandoning and five rail fans became interested in preserving one of the cars and they needed a piece of land. And from that one car that they moved to this piece of land we've mushroomed into our present size and we are intending to build four miles to a Route 1 terminal for our railroad.

Mincher: That was in 1939, now how old is your oldest car? Some of them here are very very ancient?

Butler: Our oldest car is a converted horse car from New Bedford, Massachusetts. It was built approximately in 1874.

Mincher: And these cars all operate here both frontwards and backwards, I notice. How often do you run the cars?

Butler: We run regularly scheduled rides on Saturday and Sunday afternoons during the summer roughly from the fourth of July until Labor Day although demand in the afternoons of some weekdays we start up and run.

Mincher: Where do the cars all come from? There are all sizes shapes and descriptions?

Butler: Our most far-flung car is from across the sea in Blackpool, England. It's a double deck car and always attracts a great deal of attention. Another car that we brought over the water was from Los Angeles, California, came through the Panama Canal. Then other far-flung cars from Dallas, Texas, St. Paul, my own hometown, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, we're working one from Chicago. Many of the cars come from Boston where do many of our members hail from and all over the New England area, Portland, Manchester, New Hampshire, in Connecticut many of the Connecticut cities are represented. New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Hartford and we do have some Canadian cars in urban cars from Montreal and southern counties line.

Mincher: Well now I know that we do have a member of the society board, Barbara Lee, and I'd like to ask you Barbara, in noticing people riding on these old cars here, who do you think has the most fun, the grown-ups or the kids?

Lee: I think it's about evenly divided but for different reasons. The grown-ups are probably harkening back to the days when they used to ride on these cars, and the kids have never seen such weird things.

Mincher: Well this one is what a kid might call weird, it's an old open car. Pat you could probably describe this better than I.

Butler: It is what is known in the industry as a summer car. The benches run across the car and you can board anywhere on the running boards and get immediately on the seat and the conductor goes down the running boards as the car is in motion collecting the fares and we try and reproduce that. We give out souvenir transfers and conductors wear a uniform and motor man's uniform.

Mincher: Well it certainly is interesting and stimulating and I can see that everyone aboard this car is certainly having a good time. I would sincerely recommend it to one at all. I think perhaps we air goodbye whistle. Let's check and see.

(Train whistle)

Mincher: Oh yes, one more thing that I forgot. I noticed in going through one of the other cars here that we have not only a Streetcar named Desire but there is surefire evidence in on the back of the seat in one of the cars that Kilroy Was Here. Now this is Bill Mincher of WLBZ in Bangor returning you to monitor at Radio Central.

Announcer: The previous was recorded on August 7, 1956 for Monitor.

[Transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

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